City of Lafayette

City Council Minutes

Lafayette Library and Learning Center – Don Tatzin Community Hall
3491 Mount Diablo Boulevard, Lafayette, California

March 31, 2025
6:00 p.m.

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3. **Live Remote Public Comments:** Technology permitting, members of the public may submit live public comment via Zoom conferencing by using the link below. You must download the Zoom app or software. Zoom meetings can be accessed by telephone, computer, or smart device. When the Mayor invites public comment for the item on which you would like to comment, please use the "raise hand" feature (or press *9 if connecting via telephone only) to alert staff you have a public comment to provide. Each speaker is allowed three (3) minutes to speak.

4. At the time and date of the meeting, please click this URL to join the webinar:
https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89008805648?pwd=ODQxRGxzaGNHSWVITUVFalFuUHBIZz09
Passcode: **426199** Or join by phone: Dial **1 669 900 9128**
Webinar ID: **890 0880 5648** Passcode: **426199**

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1. CALL TO ORDER – 6:00 P.M.

Mayor Candell called the Special City Council meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

Present: City Council: Mayor Candell, Vice Mayor Anduri; Councilmember McCormick

Absent: Councilmembers Cervantes and Dawson

Staff Present: Niroop Srivatsa, City Manager; Tracy Robinson, Administrative Services Director; Greg Wolff, Planning and Building Director; Mala Subramanian, City Attorney; Joanne Robbins, City Clerk

3. Disclosure and/or Take Action on Remote Participation due to Just Cause or Emergency Circumstances Pursuant to AB 2449 (Gov. Code section 54953(f).)

4. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

ACTION: It was M/S/C (Anduri/McCormick) to adopt the agenda. Vote: 3-0-2 (Ayes: Candell, Anduri, and McCormick; Noes: None; Absent: Cervantes and Dawson).

5. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE – 6:00 p.m. – Larry Blodgett led in the Pledge of Allegiance.

6. MAYOR CANDELL

A. State of the City Address
Recommendation: Receive and file.

Mayor Candell highlighted the unique financial strength of Lafayette during the newly formatted State of the City and City Volunteer Appreciation event. She welcomed volunteers and City partners, emphasizing the City's strong fiscal standing. Thanks to Measure H and the City's independent approach to employee retirement benefits—opting for a matching 401K instead of CalPERS—the City has zero unfunded liabilities, unlike many others facing billions in pension debt.

Additionally, with its only roads bond set to be paid off in June, Lafayette will be entirely debt-free. However, she acknowledged the uncertainty surrounding future State and Federal funding, noting that a potential loss of $9.7 million in grants could significantly impact the City's priorities and goals.

Mayor Candell outlined the City Council's goals for 2025/26, which remain consistent with previous years but include evolving sub-projects.

1. Wildfire Safety – The City is committed to preparing residents for potential wildfires by collaborating with partners on the most effective safety measures. She highlighted an upcoming April 1st Zoom and in-person meeting in Martinez hosted by Con Fire about the new Cal Fire maps, encouraging residents to reach out for access to the meeting link.

2. Mt. Diablo Corridor Plan – Unlike previous downtown-focused plans, this initiative takes a broader, corridor-wide approach to enhance Mt. Diablo Boulevard. With Vice Mayor Anduri's leadership, early 2026 may mark the start of planning efforts to transform the Mt. Diablo Boulevard into a "great street.

3. Fiscal Sustainability – The City will establish a Measure H Citizens' Oversight Committee this summer to ensure tax revenue aligns with projections, reinforcing Lafayette's strong financial position.

Mayor Candell then introduced new Police Chief Jaime Williams who is a highly qualified Police Chief and is passionate about community engagement and working with neighboring agencies. He started a fun "Coffee with the Cops" drop-in event, and the next one will be held on Friday, April 11th at the Lafayette Public House between 8:30 and 9:30 a.m.

Mayor Candell highlighted several key achievements and ongoing projects:

1. Road Safety Around Schools – The multi-year effort was a total success, with numerous completed projects designed to slow traffic and protect students. A project book compiled by Suzanne Iarla showcases these accomplishments. She expressed gratitude to the Transportation and Circulation Commission for their dedication.

2. Walkway on School Street – This final project in the safety initiative is at risk of losing its federal funding. The City is working quickly to complete it before funding disappears.

3. Age-Friendly Action Plan – The City adopted a new plan to help older adults live and thrive in the community, with thanks to the Senior Services Commission and Lamorinda Village for their contributions.

4. BART Walkway to Downtown Improvements – After years of planning, BART is finally moving forward with improvements, including a landscaped plaza, bike station, public art, and a safer pedestrian and bike path to downtown. The project is going out for bids soon, with hopes to break ground later this year.

Mayor Candell also highlighted exciting community-driven projects and partnerships:

1. Downtown Mural Project – The Public Art Committee is leading a community-guided process for mural designs, with the first designs expected in April. Residents will have an opportunity to provide input.

2. Park Theater Renovation – She gave a shout-out to the Park Theater Trust for reaching their goals and starting renovations on the historic Park Theater. The new flex space will offer movies, gatherings, and more, with completion expected next year.

3. Bay Area Cancer Support Community Center – A groundbreaking ceremony will be held in April for the new support center near the Reservoir. This facility will provide support services (not treatments) and serve a regional community beyond Lafayette.

4. Lafayette Community Day 2025 – Organized by the Community Foundation of Lafayette and the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce, this annual day of volunteering and celebration will be held on Saturday, May 3rd (moved up one month). The event includes family-friendly activities, a free lunch from Rancho Cantina, and live music at the Plaza. Sign-ups open next week!

Mayor Candell emphasized two major milestones for the City:

1. Affordable Housing at 949 Moraga Road – The City Council unanimously voted to sell the parking lot at 949 Moraga Road to Sunflower Hill and SAHA for $1. The plan is to develop 43 units of 100% affordable housing for developmentally disabled adults.
    - The deal lasts for one year, with a possible extension.
    - It is contingent on Sunflower Hill/SAHA securing funding.
    - Local support and donation of the land are crucial in securing State and Federal funds, which are becoming harder to obtain.
    - Look out for an announcement on their first round of funding in the coming months.
2. Housing Element Certification – The City finally received HCD Certification for their Housing Element on Friday.
    - Mayor Candell described the process as first an ultra-marathon, which turned to an Ironman Triathlon, and finally an Alaskan Iditarod combined.
    - The final push included a last-minute call between Planning Director Greg Wolff, City staff, HCD's Director, and their third HCD reviewer.
    - In real time, they answered all final questions, ensuring approval.
    - She expressed great appreciation for everyone's hard work in getting the City over the finish line.

Mayor Candell lastly acknowledged a major challenge the City is facing which is a lawsuit by the Housing Action Coalition. The Housing Action Coalition (HAC) has sued the City over its Housing Element, claiming it does not comply with State law. Even though the City has now received certification from HCD, the lawsuit does not automatically go away.

The City of San Mateo was sued by HAC even though they already had a certified Housing Element. The City of Pleasanton, which has had a certified Housing Element for a long time, is also facing legal threats from HAC. In response, the City is carefully reviewing the lawsuit and are preparing to vigorously defend themselves against these legal claims.

Mayor Candell concluded her State of the City address by expressing gratitude to all attendees, particularly the City's partners and volunteers. She acknowledged their contributions and support in making Lafayette a strong and thriving community. She then welcomed everyone to stay and enjoy the Volunteer Appreciation Event that followed, emphasizing the City's commitment to celebrating those who dedicate their time and efforts to improving Lafayette.

B. Appreciation for all City Commission, Committee, and Task Force Members
Recommendation: Receive and file.

Mayor Candell was joined by fellow Councilmembers at the podium, stating their vision for Lafayette takes teamwork and dedication, and they could not have done this without the input, ideas, recommendations, and hours of work spent by City volunteers.

Vice Mayor Anduri then began announcing the various commissions, committees, and task forces in alphabetical order, recognizing their current and past members. As each group was announced, members and their staff liaisons stood to receive a round of applause from the Council and attendees.

Banner Advisory Committee – This committee energizes the City's downtown with vivid bursts of well-designed color and important civic messages. Lafayette has California's best street banner program and this is the committee that initiates and selects the designs.

Capital Projects Assessment Committee (CPAC): This committee makes sure the City has the infrastructure it needs. They review and prioritize their list of capital projects, and develop long-range street and storm drain plans.

Code Enforcement Appeals Board: This board fairly and firmly adjudicates appeals from property owners on code enforcement matters, and they all use electric leaf blowers.

Crime Prevention Commission: This commission has very long-serving members. They help make the City safer. Among other activities, they coordinate the Neighborhood Watch, the Business Alert programs, support the Child I.D. Program, and organize a Community Safety Day with the Emergency Preparedness Commission.

Creeks Committee: Lafayette is blessed with more than 16 miles of creeks. The Creeks Committee works to protect them, to restore them, and where they run through the City's downtown, make them a civic amenity that brings us all closer to nature and enhances the vitality of the downtown.

Councilmember McCormick then began announcing the various commissions, committees, and task forces in alphabetical order, recognizing their current and past members. As each group was announced, members and their staff liaisons stood to receive a round of applause from the Council and attendees.

Design Review Commission (DRC): The DRC plays a big role in making sure that Lafayette stays as charming as possible and looking its best. This group of dedicated volunteer experts reviews building designs and remodels to make sure they fit the character of neighbors and downtown. Their thoughtful work helps preserve the unique look and feel of the City. The Council is very grateful to their dedication.

Emergency Preparedness Commission: Preparedness may not be quite as visible as the DRC, but it is essential. The commission works hard behind the scenes to help residents stay informed, ready, and resilient in the face of emergencies of all kinds. From planning resources coordinating with first-responders, they make sure Lafayette is ready for the unexpected. With the Los Angeles fire at the tops of people's minds, their work is more important than ever.

Environmental Task Force (ETF): ETF helps lead the way to a greener Lafayette. This group works on projects that protect the natural environment, reduce waste, and support eco-friendly choices throughout the City. They helped draft and evangelize the recent gas blower ban. Their dedication to building a healthier future for all of us, especially our children, is unparalleled.

General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC): GPAC has not actually met recently but they are instrumental in making sure that the City's long-term vision of Lafayette stays true to their values. They kicked off the Housing Element process and were the committee that got the ball rolling and laid that foundation. The City appreciates their time, care, and all public input received.

Land Acknowledgement Task Force (LATF): LATF helped Lafayette take meaningful steps towards recognizing and honoring Lafayette indigenous history. Through thoughtful dialogue, research and collaboration, this group crafted language and recommendations that deepen the community's understanding and respect of their overall history. Their work led to the adoption of Lafayette's official Land Acknowledge Statement, helping embed this recognition to City events and their customs.

Mayor Candell continued in announcement of recognized groups, with a round of applause following each.

Park, Trails and Recreation Commission (PTR): The PTR supports the effective management and operations of our parks. They construct, maintain and upgrade the City's trails, and support the robust programming at the Community Center.

Planning Commission (PC): The PC recommend policies that shape how the City develops, prepares the General Plan and other land use plans and reviews applications for development.

Public Art Committee (PAC): The PAC manages the City's public art program which contributes to the culture enrichment of the community, ensure public art is incorporated into the major downtown developments which has been a very big job over the last few years.

Senior Services Commission: The commission enhances the well-being of Lafayette's older adults by identifying their concerns and needs, provides information about resources, and promotes community programs and services that enable them to live meaningful lives.

Transportation and Circulation Commission (TransCirc): This commission reviews policy matters that affect the City's right-of-way and relay the Circulation Element of the General Plan. They advise on the City Council on matters pertaining to traffic safety, on-street parking, and pedestrian sidewalks and bikeways.

Youth Commission: This is by far the most fun group. They advise the City Council on issues pertaining to youth in Lafayette and coordinate activities that benefit both youth and the community at-large.

Mayor Candell then recognized representatives to regional boards:

County Library Commission: Lafayette's representative is Mary Ann Hoisington and Dorothy Walker, and the Council recognizes them for their service, representing Lafayette, on the commission.

County Connection Board of Directors: Don Tatzin serves on this board, and Mayor Candell recognized his efforts.

Lastly, before adjourning, Mayor Candell thanked the City's amazing staff who made tonight's event possible: Joanne Robbins; Paris Hackett, Dana Anderson, Niroop Srivatsa, Tracy Robinson, Suzanne Iarla, and any other staff in attendance. The event concluded with a reception, where Councilmembers, volunteers, and City partners gathered to celebrate their collective efforts in shaping the future of Lafayette.

7. ADJOURNMENT – 6:25 p.m.

APPROVED:

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Susan Candell, Mayor

ATTEST:

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Joanne Robbins, City Clerk